REMARKS

Claims 1-12 and 14-15 are pending in the present application. Of these, Claims 1-5 and 7-10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112; Claims 1-2, 4-8, 10-12 and 14-15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Maul et al; and Claims 3 and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Maul et al. in view of Shirk et al. In view of the remarks and amendments made herein, Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 112

The Office Action has rejected numerous claims as being unclear and containing the limitation of a "spacing element." Applicant notes that the spacing element is the "spacer or mock inflator" as disclosed on page 8, lines 3 and 4 of the specification as filed. The Examiner's attention is respectfully directed to the claims which have been amended to clarify the Applicant's invention by renaming the spacing element as a "spacer."

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 & 103

The Examiner's attention is respectfully directed to amended independent Claims 1 and 11 as well as independent Claims 6 and 15. Claims 1 and 11 contain the limitation that the spacer is fixedly positioned relative to the end of the piston. Review of Figures 2A through 2F of cited reference U.S. Patent No. 6,327,838, shows that the spacer element 10 moves relative to piston element 30. This system requires the use of two movable forcing elements as opposed to the Applicant's claimed invention which utilizes only a single movable piston with a hollow folding tube. Claims 6 and 15 contain the

limitation that a single piston is used to compress the cushion into the cover. Applicant notes that none of the references cited disclose these limitations. As such, rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is improper.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (586) 726-3905.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: 2/7/2003

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ATTACHMENT FOR CLAIM AMENDMENTS

The following is a marked-up version of each amended claim in which underlines indicates insertions and brackets indicate deletions.

1. (Thrice Amended) A method for installing a cushion and an inflator/horn assembly into a cover having a cover cavity therein for the cushion using only a single reciprocatively movable piston, said method comprising the steps of:

attaching the cushion to a [spacing element] spacer which is receivable within the cover cavity and which is fixedly positioned relative to an end of the piston;

securing the cover in a preferred orientation at one end of a tubular housing;

compacting the cushion into the cover cavity and around the [spacing element] spacer to define a sleeve cavity for the inflator/horn assembly by cycling the piston through one reciprocating movement cycle within the tubular housing; and

removing the [spacing element] spacer from said cushion, thereby exposing the sleeve cavity within the compacted cushion for the inflator/horn assembly.

3. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 1, further including the step of inserting a retaining ring into a cushion such that said step of attaching the cushion to the [spacing element] spacer is further defined by attaching said retaining ring to the [spacing element] spacer.

5. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 4, wherein the tubular housing is movable between an open position and a closed position relative to the base, wherein said step of securing the cushion to the [spacing element] spacer is further defined by securing

the [spacing element] spacer to the piston and further including the steps of raising the piston within the tubular housing toward the upper platform, lowering the lower platform of the housing onto the base to secure the cover, and driving the piston within the housing to compact the cushion into the cover cavity of the cover.

8. (Twice Amended) An assembly as in claim 5, wherein the [spacing element] spacer includes an outer periphery shaped to form the sleeve cavity within the cushion.

9. (Twice Amended) An assembly as in claim 5, wherein said cushion further includes a retaining ring to attach said cushion to said [spacing element] spacer.

11. (Thrice Amended) A method for installing a cushion into an interior cavity of a cover using one reciprocatively movable piston having a fixed spacer, said method comprising the steps of;

forming a cushion subassembly and attaching same to the piston, the subassembly including a cushion housing and the cushion;

positioning the cover apart from the piston;

moving the piston and the attached cushion assembly along a fixed tube in a first direction away from the cover to cause the cushion to expand as it rubs against the inner sides of the tube;

moving the piston toward the cover to press the cushion and fixed spacer into the cover, thereby folding same and positioning the housing atop the now folded cushion within the interior of the cover.

14. (Twice Amended) The assembly as defined in Claim 6 wherein the [piston means includes] spacer is a mock inflator movable with the piston and locatable within a determinable volume within the cover cavity to prevent the air bag from being folded within this volume.

15. (Twice Amended) A method for installing a cushion into a cavity of a cover using only one reciprocatively movable piston, said method comprising the steps of:

a) providing a hollow folding tube;

b) placing the piston near a determinable location in the folding tube;

c) attaching an air bag to an air bag housing sized to fit into the cover cavity;

d) securing the air bag housing to the piston;

e) withdrawing the piston up the folding tube to at least partially elongate the air bag;

f) positioning the cover proximate an open end of the folding tube with the cover cavity facing the open end; and

g) urging the piston, housing and air bag toward and into the cover cavity until the air bag fills the cover cavity and the housing is placed on the [cove] cover.